

Notice of Proposed Action

Yellowjacket Project

**Blanco Ranger District, White River National Forest
Rio Blanco County, Colorado**

Portions of Sections 1-3, 10-15, 22-27 and 34-36, T2N, R92W;
Portions of Sections 4-9, 17-20 and 26-36, T2N, R91W;
Portions of Sections 1-3 and 12, T1N, R92W;
Portions of Sections 1-17, 20-24, 26-29 and 32-34, T1N, R91W;
Portions of Sections 7, 18 and 19 T1N, R90W;
6th Principal Meridian, Rio Blanco County, Colorado.

Comments Welcome

The Blanco Ranger District of the White River National Forest welcomes your comments on its proposal to implement the Yellowjacket Project located approximately 16 miles east-northeast of Meeker, Colorado. Your comments will help us complete an environmental assessment. The assessment will be used to determine whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact. Instructions for submitting comments are described on the last page.

Background

The Yellowjacket Project is located within the vicinity of Wilson Park, Sawmill Mountain and Ellison Mountain. This project area encompasses approximately 39,954 acres of National Forest System Lands and contains a variety of forest cover types, including aspen (17,818 acres), mixed conifer (spruce/fir 4,643 acres), lodgepole pine (2,692 acres) and Douglas-fir (315 acres). These vegetation types occur in a mosaic pattern and are intermixed with meadows and natural openings. All vegetation types are generally in a mature state, except in areas where previous harvest has regenerated lodgepole pine and aspen.

Natural disturbances have occurred in the project area. Large, stand-replacing fires occurred around the turn of the century (1880-1900) converting mixed conifer stands to the aspen and lodgepole pine stands that are present today. Historic insect and disease disturbances were limited. Mountain pine beetle and spruce beetle activity remained confined to small groups of trees until 2011 when mountain pine beetles moved through the area killing up to 68 percent of the mature lodgepole pine within some stands.

Historically, this area has provided both personal and commercial forest products. It also supports a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreation including camping, hunting, snowmobiling, forest product gathering and off highway vehicle trail riding. Other uses of the area includes grazing and outfitting.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the proposed action is to:

- Improve forest resilience to potential future disturbances by maintaining and/or increasing age and size class diversity at the stand and landscape scale.
- Provide forest products and/or biomass to local industries
- Improve current and future material sources to support road maintenance and road reconstruction activities.

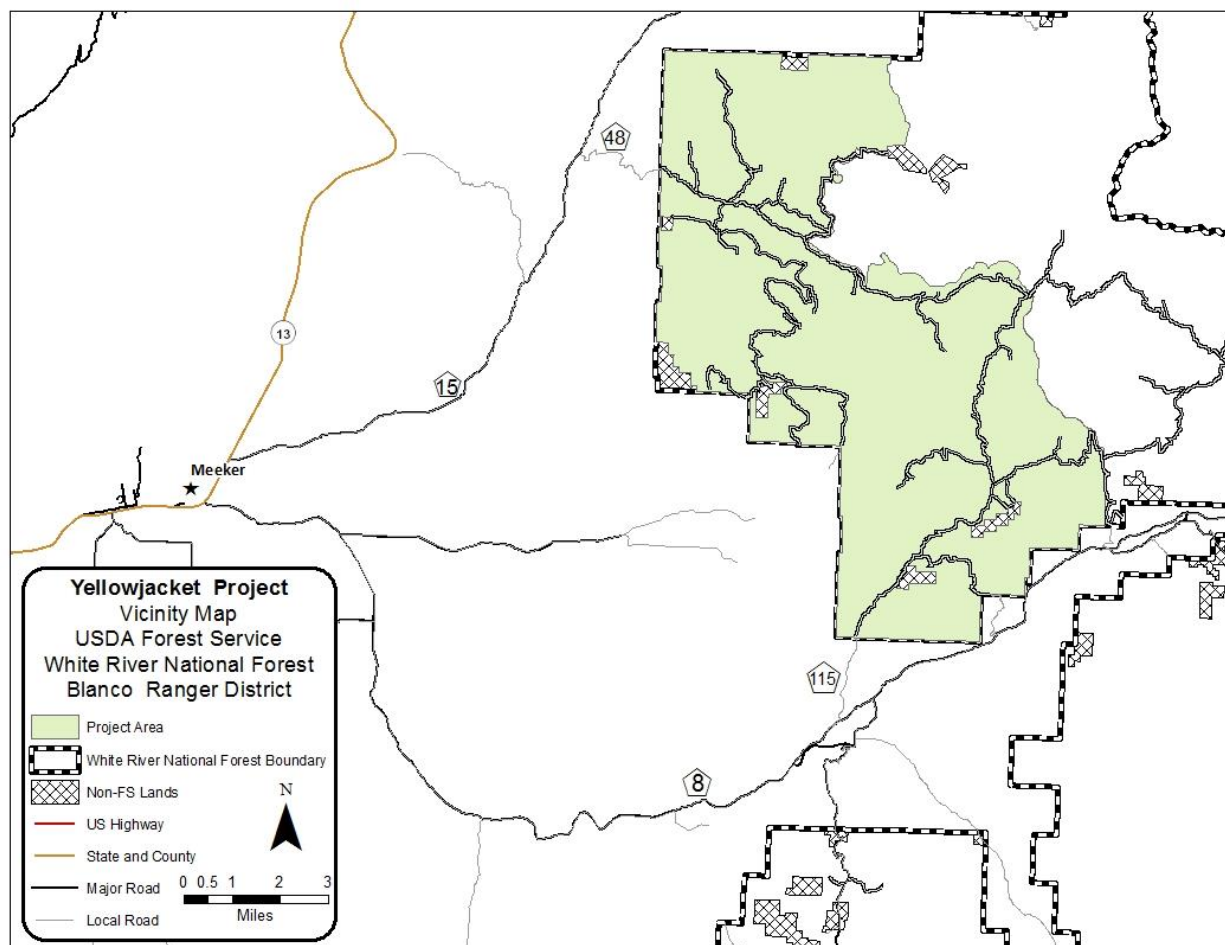
The proposed action is needed because:

- Natural disturbance processes have been suppressed in a landscape that was previously adapted to wildfire.
- Forest resiliency is lacking across the landscape due, in part, to the absence of age and size class diversity in both aspen and mixed conifer stands.
- Local and regional timber markets exist that can utilize forest products.
- Development of local material sources would better support present and continued road maintenance and road reconstruction activities.

In addition to the forest vegetation and forest health, there are opportunities to incorporate projects that benefit multiple resource areas to realize efficiencies in project planning. One additional project was identified during project initiation.

- Road realignment along National Forest System Road (NFSR) 269 (Cottonwood Creek Road) of approximately six tenths of a mile to avoid crossing a private inholding by public users and to provide adequate access to a proposed harvest unit. The existing route would be decommissioned.

Other benefits of the proposed action include an opportunity to maintain forest system roads to standard and decommission non-system roads and trails, improving erosion control.

Figure 1. Yellow Jacket Project Vicinity Map¹

Proposed Action

The Blanco Ranger District is proposing to implement approximately 2,300 (+/- 10%) acres of vegetation management activities on National Forest System lands located Rio Blanco County, Colorado. Potential treatment areas have been identified in the vicinity of Wilson Park, Sawmill Mountain and Ellison Mountain. Vegetation management activities include clearcuts with leave tree, coppice (aspen clearcuts), group selection, sanitation/salvage and commercial thinning. Broadcast burning with hand treatment prep has also been proposed.

In addition to the vegetation treatments, two road realignments are proposed. One is a previously analyzed road realignment adjacent to NFSR 260 (Sawmill Mountain Road) to avoid a steep, rocky section of road. The other, adjacent to NFSR 269 (Cottonwood Creek

¹ All maps in this document are reproduced from geospatial information prepared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. GIS data and product accuracy may vary. They may be: developed from sources of differing accuracy, accurate only at certain scales, based on modeling or interpretation, incomplete while being created or revised, etc. Using GIS products for purposes other than those for which they were created may yield inaccurate or misleading results. The Forest Service reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace, GIS products based on new inventories, new or revised information, and if necessary in conjunction with other federal, state, or local public agencies or the public in general as required by policy or regulation. Previous recipients of the products may not be notified unless required by policy or regulation. For more information, contact the White River National Forest at (970) 945-2521.

Road), is a realignment of approximately six tenths of a mile to avoid crossing a private inholding by public users and to provide adequate access to a proposed harvest unit.

Table 1. Vegetation Treatment Unit Summary for the Proposed Action

Unit Number	Prescription	Method	Acres	Management Area
101	Clearcut with Leave Tree	Ground Based Mechanized	86	5.13
102	Clearcut with Leave Tree	Ground Based Mechanized	8	5.13
103	Clearcut with Leave Tree	Ground Based Mechanized	20	5.13
104	Clearcut with Leave Tree	Ground Based Mechanized	31	5.13
105	Clearcut with Leave Tree	Ground Based Mechanized	6	5.13
106	Clearcut with Leave Tree	Ground Based Mechanized	88	5.13
107	Clearcut with Leave Tree	Ground Based Mechanized	116	5.13
108	Clearcut with Leave Tree	Ground Based Mechanized	13	5.4
109	Clearcut with Leave Tree	Ground Based Mechanized	13	5.4
110	Clearcut with Leave Tree	Ground Based Mechanized	77	5.4
111	Clearcut with Leave Tree	Ground Based Mechanized	226	5.4
112	Clearcut with Leave Tree	Ground Based Mechanized	23	5.4
113	Clearcut with Leave Tree	Ground Based Mechanized	268	5.4
Total Acres Clearcut			975	
207	Coppice (Clearcut)	Ground Based Mechanized	15	5.4
208	Coppice (Clearcut)	Ground Based Mechanized	14	5.4
209	Coppice (Clearcut)	Ground Based Mechanized	31	5.4
210	Coppice (Clearcut)	Ground Based Mechanized	8	5.4
212	Coppice (Clearcut)	Ground Based Mechanized	21	5.4
213	Coppice (Clearcut)	Ground Based Mechanized	12	5.4
214	Coppice (Clearcut)	Ground Based Mechanized	39	5.4
217	Coppice (Clearcut)	Ground Based Mechanized	36	5.4
218	Coppice (Clearcut)	Ground Based Mechanized	29	5.4
219	Coppice (Clearcut)	Ground Based Mechanized	19	5.4
220	Coppice (Clearcut)	Ground Based Mechanized	19	5.4
221	Coppice (Clearcut)	Ground Based Mechanized	14	5.4
222	Coppice (Clearcut)	Ground Based Mechanized	53	5.4
Total Acres Coppice (Clearcut)			310	
301	Group Selection	Ground Based Mechanized	29	5.13
302	Group Selection	Ground Based Mechanized	97	5.13
303	Group Selection	Ground Based Mechanized	76	5.4
304	Group Selection	Ground Based Mechanized	45	5.4
305	Group Selection	Ground Based Mechanized	37	5.4
306	Group Selection	Ground Based Mechanized	94	5.4
Total Acres Group Selection			378	
401	Sanitation/Salvage	Ground Based Mechanized	214	5.13
402	Sanitation/Salvage	Ground Based Mechanized	12	5.13
403	Sanitation/Salvage	Ground Based Mechanized	255	5.13
Total Acres Sanitation/Salvage			481	
501	Commercial Thin (Post and Pole)	Ground Based Mechanized	22	5.13
502	Commercial Thin (Post and Pole)	Ground Based Mechanized	43	5.13
503	Commercial Thin (Post and Pole)	Ground Based Mechanized	28	5.13
Total Acres Commercial Thin			93	
601	Broadcast Burn with Prep	Ground Based Mechanized	33	5.4
602	Broadcast Burn with Prep	Ground Based Mechanized	23	5.4
Total Acres Broadcast Burn			56	
Total Acres Implementation			2,293	

Silvicultural Prescriptions

Clearcut with Leave Tree

Areas identified to be treated with a clearcut with leave tree prescription would have all live and dead lodgepole pine and aspen harvested with the exception of advanced regeneration. Groups of Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir and Douglas-fir that are expected to have low windthrow risk following harvest operations would be left intact. Individual Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, and Douglas-fir with increased windthrow risk would be harvested. Areas treated with this prescription are expected to regenerate naturally with lodgepole pine and aspen.

Coppice

A coppice prescription is proposed in areas dominated by aspen. Treatment areas were identified across the project area where aspen clones are mature and are generally experiencing declining tree vigor. In units identified to be treated using a coppice prescription, all trees greater than 2 inches diameter at breast height (DBH) would be removed. Treated areas would be expected to regenerate as aspen via root suckering, creating a new age class of aspen.

Group Selection

A group selection prescription is proposed in areas dominated by Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir. This prescription seeks to initiate a new age class while maintaining a mature overstory. In units identified to be treated using a group selection prescription, small openings one-half to two acres in size would be created where all trees greater than 5 inches DBH would be removed. Openings would be located at least 2 tree lengths from one another and would be dispersed throughout the proposed treatment areas. Cumulatively, group openings would not exceed 25 percent of a unit's total size.

Sanitation/Salvage

A sanitation/salvage prescription is proposed in areas of mixed conifer with scattered dead conifer. All dead conifer trees would be harvested. In addition, lodgepole pine infested with dwarf mistletoe would be harvested to suppress dwarf mistletoe infestations from spreading.

Personal Use/Commercial Thin (Post and Pole)

A commercial thin prescription is proposed within units of post and pole sized (2.0-6.9" DBH) lodgepole pine stands. These stands would be thinned, removing up to 35 percent of the basal area, to improve health and vigor of residual trees.

Broadcast Burn with Prep

A broadcast burn prescription is proposed in areas dominated by Ponderosa pine. These stands would be hand treated to encourage a low intensity fire to consume smaller fuels and kill encroaching less fire adapted species.

Implementation Methods

Conventional ground-based logging systems are planned for tree removal over the majority of this project including: rubber-tired skidders, track skidders and rubber-tired or track-mechanized harvesters. Logging activities (cutting, felling, yarding, temporary road construction and obliteration, road maintenance and road reconstruction) may occur year-round as weather and ground conditions allow.

To provide special forest products to the public, small commercial or personal use sales may be used in part to accomplish treatment objectives. Slash piles and non-merchantable material may be burned and/or removed for biomass utilization.

Figure 2. Proposed Vegetation Treatment Areas (Wilson Park Area)

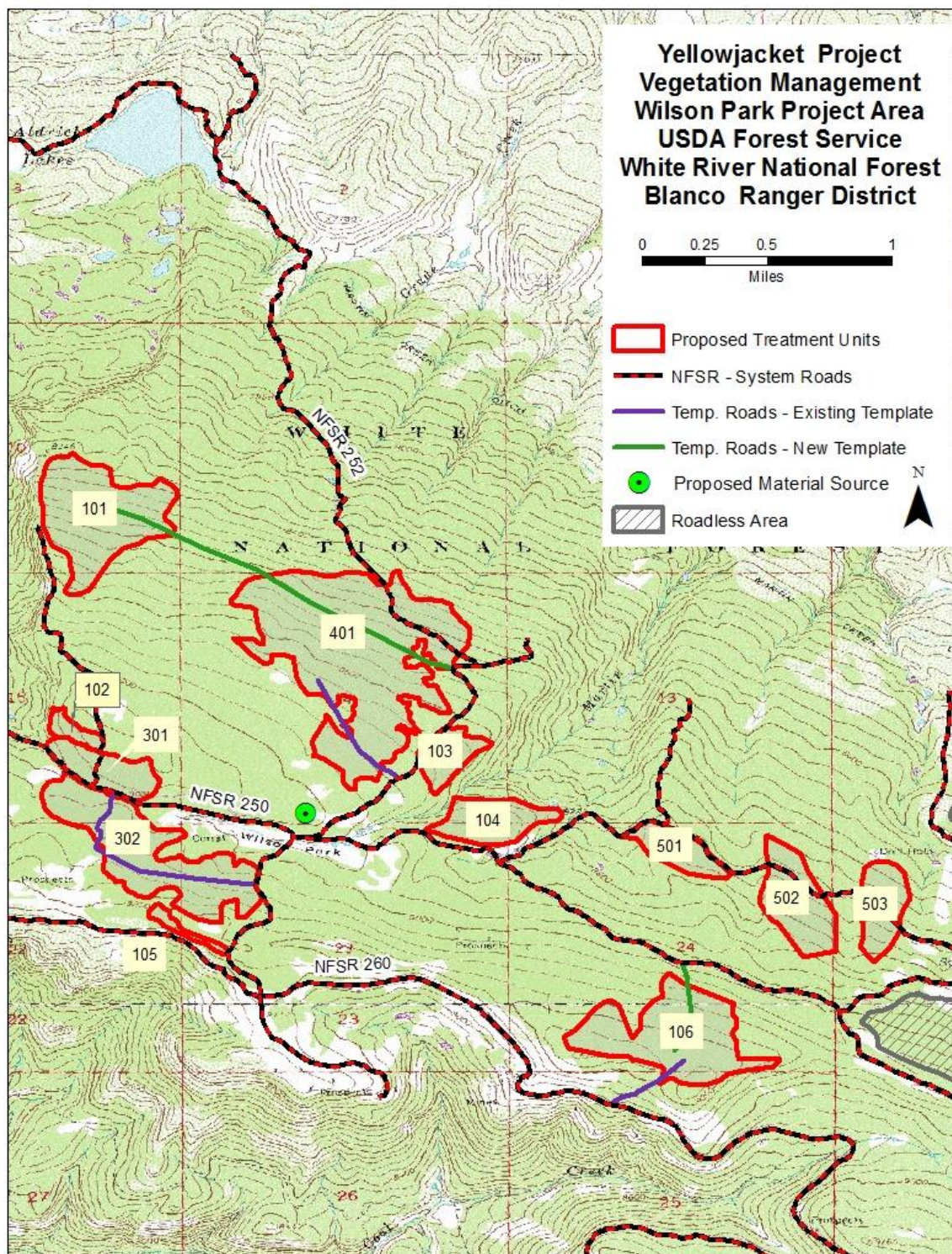


Figure 3. Proposed Vegetation Treatment Areas (Sawmill Mountain Area)

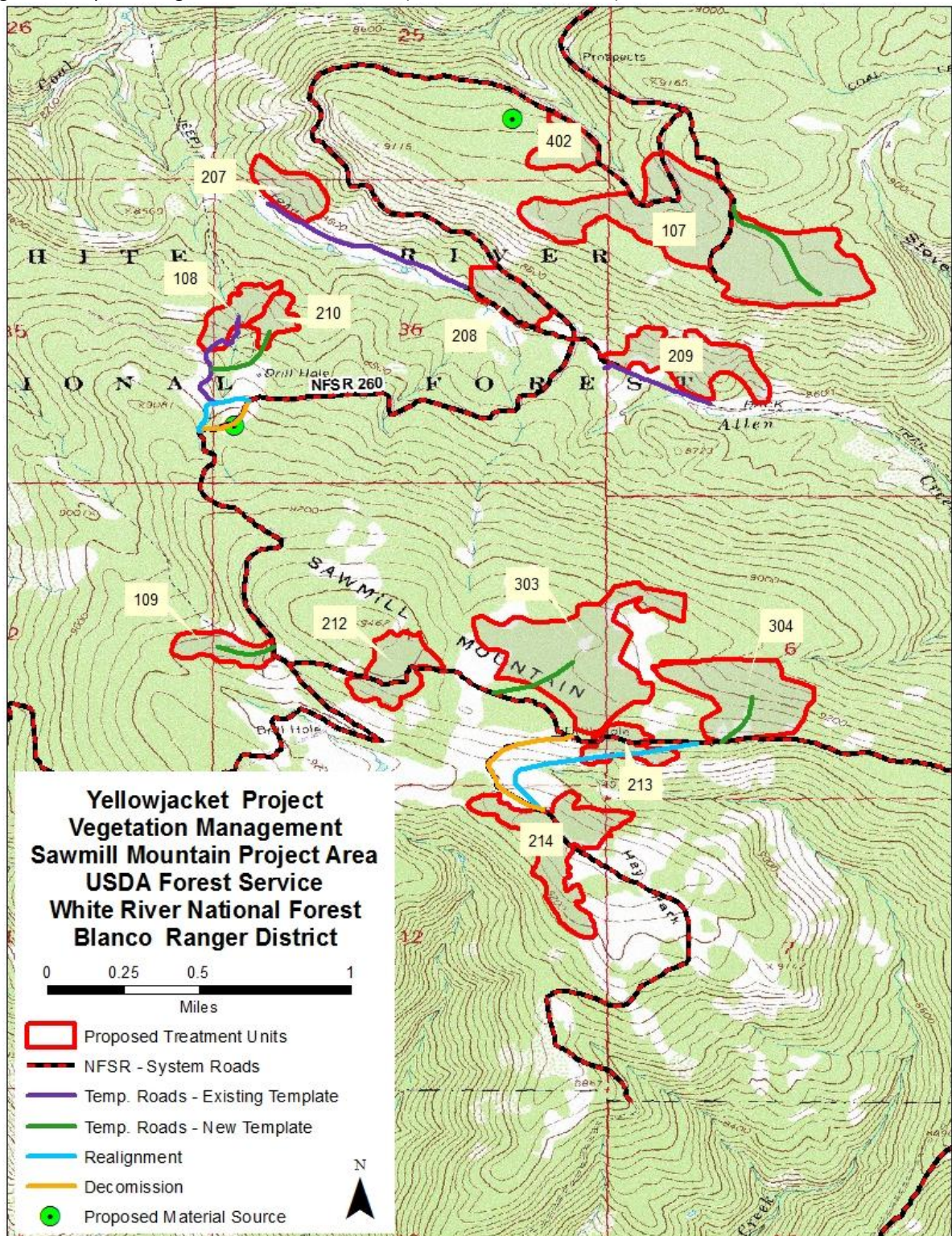
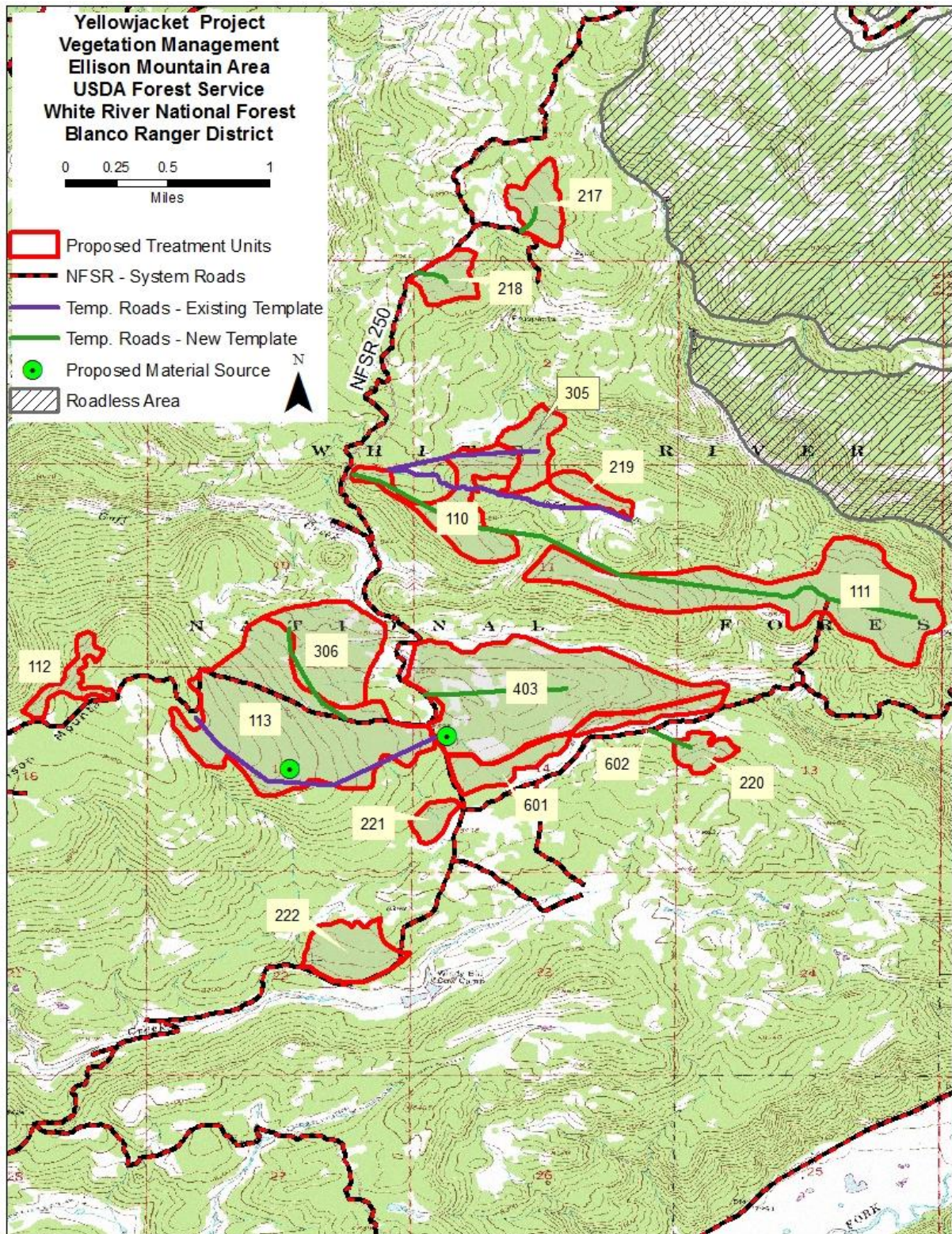


Figure 4. Proposed Vegetation Treatment Areas (Ellison Mountain Area)



Transportation

The proposed action would use existing system roads and trails, county roads, and temporary roads to provide access to proposed treatment areas.

Table 2: Proposed Transportation System Haul Routes

Route Number	Route Name	Length	Maintenance Level	Units Accessed	Acres	Estimated Log Truck or Chip Van Loads
Southern Haul Route						
County Road 115	East Beaver/ Yellowjacket	2.3	3	110-113, 217-221, 305, 306, 401	1,057	2,503
NFSR 250	East Beaver/ Yellowjacket	8.6	2	110-113, 217-221, 305, 306, 401	1,057	2,503
NFSR 280	Fawn Creek	1.2	2	220	19	58
NFSR 273	Ellison Mtn	2.0	2	112, 113, 306	386	953
NFSR 270	Marci Camp	0.3	2	217	36	107
Northern Haul Route						
County Road 48	East Beaver/ Yellowjacket	2.7	3	101-109, 207-214, 301-304, 401, 402, 501-503	993	2,065
NFSR 250	East Beaver/ Yellowjacket	3.1	2	101-109, 207-214, 301-304, 401, 402, 501-503	993	2,065
NFSR 260	Sawmill Mtn	10.3	2	105, 107-109, 207-214, 302-304, 402	518	1,063
NFSR 252	Aldrich/ Wilson Park	1.5	2	101, 103, 401	319	572
NFSR 253	Martin Ridge	1.6	2	501-503	94	24
NFSR 251	Yellowjacket Rim	0.2	2	102	8	25
NFSR 269	Cottonwood Creek	0.2	2	214	39	118
NFSR 269	Cottonwood Creek Realignment	0.7	2	214	39	118
NFSR 266	Allen Creek	0.2	2	209	31	94
NFSR 265	Columbine Station	0.3	2	207, 208	29	87
NFSR 262	Stove Ridge	0.7	2	107	116	349

The number of log trucks or chip vans that can be expected on haul routes varies based on a number of factors, including weather, operational restrictions, and equipment issues. However, on average during active operations 7-10 log trucks or chip vans would be expected on haul routes per day.

Road Reconstruction, Reconditioning and Maintenance

Road reconstruction, reconditioning and maintenance work would be needed in order to facilitate commercial hauling of forest products while providing long term drainage and erosion control. Proposed road reconstruction may include, but is not limited to:

- subgrade reinforcement of soft areas
- construction/reconstruction of reinforced drainage dips
- construction/reconstruction of roadside ditches
- culvert installation or replacement

- realignment of the travelway due to steep rocky grades
- realignment of the travelway to provide access around private lands
- decommissioning of abandoned sections of road
- minor realignments of the travelway to straighten the road
- curve widening to allow commercial vehicle access
- turnout construction
- roadside clearing and brushing to improve sight distances
- improvement of a low water crossing
- creation and use of material sources

Temporary Roads

Approximately 12.2 miles of temporary road would be needed to complete harvesting activities. Approximately 5.6 miles of temporary road has an existing road template in place, of which 1.9 miles are motorized trails. Approximately 6.6 miles of new temporary road construction would be needed. All temporary roads would be closed to public use while operations are occurring. Following harvesting activities, newly constructed temporary roads would be decommissioned or closed in a manner that discourages motorized and mechanized use in accordance with the White River National Forest Travel Management Plan.

Table 3: Proposed Temporary Roads

Temporary Road #	Route Name	Units Accessed	Length (Miles)	Existing Template
T1	-----	101, 401	1.3	No
T2	-----	401	0.5	Yes
T3	Uranium Peak Cutoff	302	0.8	Yes
T4	-----	106	0.4	No
T5	Pole Patch	106	0.3	Yes
T6	-----	107	0.4	No
T7 (NFST 2286)	Columbine	207	0.6	Yes*
T8 (NFST 2272)	Big Beaver Basin	209	0.3	Yes*
T9	-----	108, 210	0.4	Yes
T10	-----	210	0.2	No
T11	-----	109	0.2	No
T12	-----	303	0.2	No
T13	-----	304	0.2	No
T14	-----	217	0.1	No
T15	-----	218	0.1	No
T16	Pole Patch	110, 305	0.6	Yes
T17 (NFST 2271)	Pole Patch	110, 219, 305	1.0	Yes*
T18	-----	110, 111	2.3	No
T19	-----	113, 306	0.5	No
T20	-----	112, 113	1.1	Yes
T21	-----	403	0.5	No
T22	-----	220	0.2	No

*Currently a trail open to UTV, ATV and motorcycles (vehicles less than 62 inches in width)

Trails Used As Temporary Roads

The following system trails in Table 4 would be used as temporary roads to access treatment areas. These trails would be widened to a 14 foot width to accommodate log hauling. After

use, the temporary road surface would be decommissioned and the trails restored to their original width. In addition, any travel width restrictors removed during temporary road construction would be reinstalled.

Table 4: Proposed Trails Utilized as Temporary Roads

Trail Number	Trail Name	Length (Miles)
NFST 2286	Columbine	0.6
NFST 2272	Big Beaver Basin	0.3
NFST 2271	Pole Patch	1
	Total	1.9

Material Source

Five material sources are proposed to be used to maintain and repair existing roads within the project area. Of these, two have been developed previously. Prior to removing material from material sources, topsoil would be stockpiled, and material would be removed in such a manner to provide drainage and to mimic natural contours. Closure would consist of replacing the topsoil and revegetation (native seeding). Material source access roads would be closed and any areas disturbed by construction activities associated with development would be rehabilitated after completion of this proposed project.

Associated activities

Other activities associated with project implementation include regeneration surveys and fill-in planting. Regeneration surveys would be conducted in all regeneration harvest treatment units (clearcut with leave tree, coppice and group selection) in the 1st, 3rd and 5th years following the completion of all harvest activities. Fill-in planting may occur within regeneration harvest treatment units that do not meet minimum stocking levels identified in the Forest Plan (2002).

Management Direction

Forest Plan Standard – Openings Greater than 40 Acres

The proposed action includes treatment units that are larger than 40 acres as well as treatment units adjacent to each other that when combined are greater than 40 acres. Forest Plan Standards set the maximum size of even-aged management units at 40 acres with the following exceptions:

- When proposals for larger openings are approved by the Regional Forester after a 60-day public review
- When larger openings are the result of natural catastrophic conditions or
- When the area that is cut does not meet the definition of created openings.

All areas proposed for clearcut with leave tree and coppice cutting meet the definition of created openings. This project is being submitted for a 60 day comment period in accordance with this standard. Following the formal comment period the project will be submitted to the Regional Forester for approval.

Forest Plan Goals and Objectives

The proposed action aligns with goals, objectives, and strategies from the 2002 White River National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan pgs. 1-3, 1-15) specifically;

Goal 1 Ecosystem Health

Promote ecosystem health and conservation using a collaborative approach to sustain the nation's forests, grasslands and watersheds.

Objective 1a – Improve and protect watershed conditions to provide the water quality and quantity and soil productivity necessary to support ecological functions and intended beneficial uses.

Objective 1d – Increase the amount of forest and rangelands restored to or maintained in a healthy condition with reduced risk and damage from fires, insects, disease and invasive species.

Strategy 1.d.7 – Implement management practices, including prescribed fire, that will move landscapes towards desired vegetation composition and structure as described in the management area description and the Historic Range of Variability.

Strategy 1.d.9 – Over the life of the plan, management practices that mimic ecological processes, such as fire insect and disease, and other disturbances, will operate on forest and grassland landscapes in a manner consistent with desired conditions and management area direction.

Objective 1e – Work cooperatively with individuals, organizations, local, state, tribal and other federal agencies to promote ecosystem health and sustainability across landscapes.

Goal 2 Multiple Benefits to People

Provide a variety of uses, products and services for present and future generations by managing within the capability of sustainable ecosystems.

Objective 2c – Improve the capability of national forest and rangelands to sustain desired uses, values, products and services.

Strategy 2.c.1 – By the end of the plan period, offer for sale the allowable timber sale quantity.

Goal 4 Effective Public Service

Ensure the acquisition and use of an appropriate corporate infrastructure to enable the efficient delivery of a variety of uses.

Objective 4a – Improve the safety and economy of Forest Service roads, trails, facilities and operations and provide greater security for the public and employees.

Strategy 4a.1 – Within five years of plan approval, conduct appropriate maintenance on 25 percent of the Forest Development Transportation System each year.

Goal 5 Public Collaboration

Engage the American public, interested organizations, private landowners, state and local governments, federal agencies and others in the stewardship of National Forest System Lands.

Objective 5a – Work cooperatively with individuals and organizations, local, state, tribal, and federal governments to promote ecological, economic and social health and sustainability across landscapes.

Strategy 5a.1 – Provide opportunities for local governmental jurisdictions and other interested parties to participate in planning and management of National Forest System lands, especially where local governmental jurisdictions or other landowners are contiguous to or may be affected by the management of these lands.

The project area is located within the following Forest Plan-designated management areas:

Management Area 5.13 – Resource Production – Forest Products

These lands are managed to provide commercial wood products. In addition, they provide for forage production, other commercial products, scenic quality, diversity of wildlife, and a variety of other goods and services. Numerous open roads provide commercial access and roaded recreational opportunities, while closed roads provide non-motorized opportunities. The desired condition of this management area prescription is to maintain suitable forested areas with commercially valuable species at ages, densities and sizes that allow growth rates and stand health conducive to providing a sustained yield of forest products. To achieve this objective, a full array of silvicultural systems will be used that will produce a range of successional stages from seedlings to late-successional stands. Priority will be given to converting decadent and overmature stands to young stands managed at stocking levels that maintain acceptable site occupancy and rates of growth. In areas in which timber harvest is planned, rotation periods are shorter and more frequent. Wildfires are suppressed and insect and disease populations are maintained at endemic levels to protect commercial forest products. (Forest Plan, Chapter 3, ppgs. 3-53 - 3-54). These lands are part of the suitable timber base.

Management Area 5.4 – Forested Flora and Fauna Habitats

These areas are primarily forested ecosystems intermingled with grassland and shrub communities, and are managed to provide a mix of ecological and human needs. These needs include wildlife and aquatic habitats, livestock forage, and forest products. These areas also provide for recreational opportunities, scenic quality, and a variety of other miscellaneous goods and services. These areas provide for a variety of forest and non-forest plant communities and successional stages, over the long term, through a combination of human manipulation and natural processes. Management activities are influenced by biological processes found in the area, and strive to replicate local natural vegetation patterns and patch size (HRV). Vegetation management is designed to simulate natural disturbances, thus silvicultural treatments may be larger than 40 acres in size. Vegetation composition and structure exist in a range of successional stages to meet wildlife and aquatic habitat, livestock forage, and forest product objectives. Timber harvest rotation ages will pattern historical ranges of variability. Management activities will provide adequate late successional structure components in forested stands and will maintain fire-dependent ecosystems over the long term (Forest Plan, Chapter 3, pgs. 3-55 – 3-56). These lands are part of the timber suitable base.

The project will be designed to conform to the Forest Plan and all other laws, regulations and policies. Forest Plan standards and guidelines will be applied as appropriate to meet Forest Plan goals and desired conditions.

Nature of Decision to be Made

For this project, the responsible official is the Blanco District Ranger, Curtis Keetch. Given the purpose and need, the responsible official will review the environmental analysis of the proposed action, other alternatives, and any public comments in order to make the following decisions:

1. Whether the proposed action will proceed as proposed, as modified by an alternative, or not at all?
2. If it proceeds:
 - a. What design features/mitigation measures and monitoring requirements should be applied to the proposed action?
 - b. Does the project require a Forest Plan amendment?

Public Involvement

The project was first listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions in February 2020 and updates are provided quarterly. Further information about this project can be found on our website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/fs-usda-pop.php/?project=57654>.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action

No Action

The EA may document consideration of a no-action alternative through the effects analysis by contrasting the impacts of the proposed action and any alternative(s) with the current condition and expected future condition if the proposed action were not implemented (36 CFR 220.7(b)(2)(ii)). Under the No Action Alternative, natural processes would continue and vegetation management, material source development and road realignment would not occur. The area would continue to be used for recreation, personal use forest product gathering, hunting and grazing.

Effects and Issues to Consider

The environmental assessment will address the effects of the proposed action and alternatives to key issues identified during internal and external scoping. The assessment will be issue-driven and contain detail commensurate to the degree to which a resource may be affected.

Issues are cause and effect relationships that arise as a result of the proposed action. At this time, the Forest Service has not identified any issues but will use information gathered from this comment period to identify issues to be addressed.

Issues raised in response to this notice of proposed action will be considered and addressed in the environmental analysis. Some issues may be addressed through modification of the proposed action, development of a new alternative, or mitigation measures.

Comment Process

The proposed project is an activity implementing a land management plan and subject to the objection process described in 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B. The Forest Service is combining scoping with the legal notice and opportunity to comment, as described in §218.24. The public is encouraged to provide specific written comments on this proposal, including supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider. Specific written comments should be within the scope of and have a direct relationship to the proposed action.

Written comments will be accepted for 60 calendar days following the publication of a legal notice in the Rio Blanco Herald Times. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period. The regulations prohibit extending the length of the comment period.

Written comments must be submitted via mail, fax, electronically, or in person (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding holidays) to: Curtis Keetch, District Ranger, c/o Christopher McDonald, 220 E. Market Street, Meeker, Colorado 81641, FAX: (970) 878-5173. Electronic comments including attachments can be submitted to <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=57654>.

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Only those who submit timely and specific written comments will have eligibility to file an objection under §218.8. For objection eligibility, each individual or representative from each entity submitting timely and specific written comments must either sign the comment or verify identity upon request. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to object must meet the information requirements in §218.25(a)(3). Names and contact information submitted with comments will become part of the public record and may be released under the Freedom of Information Act.

If the agency determines there are no significant impacts, that finding along with the EA and a draft decision notice will be published for a 45-day objection period. If no specific written comments are received during the designated opportunity for comment, the project will not be subject to objection. If the EA concludes there is potential for significant impacts, then an environmental impact statement will need to be prepared.

This Notice of Proposed Action also is requesting your comments under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (NHPA). Consultation under the NHPA seeks to consider the views about an undertaking and its effects on historic properties for the agency official to consider in decision making (36 CFR 800).

Additional information regarding this action can be obtained from: Christopher McDonald, 220 E. Market Street, Meeker, CO 81641 (970)625-6856 or email at christopher.mcdonald@usda.gov.

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